

6.
The great *Sin* and *Danger* of Oppression:

Two Sermons,
PREACHED
During the late high Prices of Corn,
T O A
Society of Protestant Dissenters,
A T
Dob-Lane End,
NEAR
M A N C H E S T E R.

By R. R O B I N S O N. *K*

With a Preface endeavouring to obviate
some Reflections cast upon the Author
for preaching the said Sermons.

*He that withholdeth Corn the People shall
Curse him, but Blessing shall be upon
the Head of him that selleth it. Prov. xi. 26.*

M A N C H E S T E R:

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T H E
P R E F A C E.

IN this State of Frailty and Imperfection, to err is human ; so that a Misunderstanding may possibly arise between two Persons or Parties, while both Sides are equally honest and innocent.

And therefore the Author would be far from blaming those who have cast Reflections upon, or received unfavourable Impressions against him ; he is so far acquainted with human Nature as to know, that such Things will sometimes unavoidably happen, among the wisest and best of Men. But as the Author's Character has been actually blackened, and himself greatly injured in the Opinion of his Friends, by preaching the following Discourses, an Apology is become absolutely necessary ; and upon this Account can-

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not be thought, by any considerate Person, to be either unseasonable or impertinent.

I have no other View as an Author, at this Time, than to do myself Justice in apologizing to the World. I might have attempted it much sooner, but was afraid of giving Uneasiness or creating any fresh Disturbance, and therefore postponed it to a more fair Opportunity, when it may reasonably be supposed that Prejudice on all Hands is, in a great Measure, if not entirely, subsided; that Men's Passions are grown calm; and, in a Word, that they are better qualified for judging upon such a Performance as this with Candour and Impartiality.

When a Minister of the Gospel fully believes that there are People engaged in wrong Practices and Pursuits, it is, as I apprehend, his indispensable Duty to let it be known, to speak his Sentiments openly and clearly, without Equivocation or any mental Reserve: Should he happen to be mistaken or misinformed, he, notwithstanding that, acts an honest and laudable Part; a Part, which tho' afterwards conscious of his Error, must acquit him in the Court of his own Conscience, and will undoubtedly

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undoubtedly be approved, and, in some Measure applauded, by every judicious and worthy Man.

I am far from pretending to be infallible ; perhaps I might, in some Respects, be imposed upon or mistaken ; but be that as it will, I shall proceed to vindicate my Conduct upon that Occasion, and offer something in my own Defence.

Now I think it may very fairly, without any Breach of Charity, be supposed that there are some dishonest People in every Branch of Business ; Persons who have not the Fear of God before their Eyes ; who pay no Regard to Reason, Duty, Conscience, Gratitude or Obedience ; who will not scruple to violate the Laws of God and their Country, in Order to carry on and promote their own secular Interest and Advantage ; and tho' I verily believe there was a real Scarcity, yet I am apt to think, Circumstances considered, that it was wrought up into an artificial one, thro' the crafty Measures of the designing and disingenuous.

I am equally sensible, however, that others might possibly suffer thro' an unjust Imputation. I know by Experience that
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when the Mob and the Rabble get a Notion into their Heads, it is an impracticable Thing to beat it out. *Tho' thou bray a Fool in a Mortar, amongst Wheat, with a Pestel,* says the wise Man, *yet will not his Foolishness depart from him.* But "such " Discourses, thro' Misapplication, may " possibly throw an Aspersions upon the " innocent." In Answer to which let it only be considered, that the righteous and the ungodly are so closely connected in this promiscuous State of Things, that it very often goes well with the wicked upon Account of his Neighbour's Righteousness, while the innocent are necessarily involved with the guilty, and suffer greatly thro' their Folly and Imprudence. I apprehend it will not hold good as a Maxim in Law-- That the guilty must always pass with Impunity, where the innocent are, in any Degree, liable to be affected by the Consequence.

It has indeed, thro' some Mistake or other, been falsely suggested that these Discourses were composed in Favour of the Weavers, and that they were levelled against the Gentlemen concerned in the *Manchester* Manufacture. In Answer to
this

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this, I shall only say, that the former was composed long before those Differences happened and was preached, as I find, on June 12th, 1757; the latter was indeed composed and preached after that Affair commenced, but the bare Reading of it will be sufficient to convince the Publick, that the Author never intended to interfere with, or meddle in, any such Matters.

On the other Hand in this Discourse, under the second Proposition, I enquired into the various Ways and Methods in which Men of all Professions might exercise Compassion and Charity towards the miserable and distressed, and hence, with a View to the publick Infirmary, took Occasion to pay a Compliment to the Gentlemen in and about *Manchester*, for their Generosity and Benevolence. A strange Piece of Inconsistency indeed! that I should represent them as oppressing the Labourer and reproaching their Maker, and then immediately rank them among the Number of those who honoured him, by shewing Mercy to the Poor, and support the Argument by an Instance which would not fail to be applied by the Congregation as it was intended it should.

But

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But it has been further objected, that " I inveigh'd chiefly against the rich."--- Did ever any Minister, upon the same Subject, do otherwise? The sacred Writers, when they touch upon this Vice, take the very same Method: It is a natural Inference; for Oppression always implies Power and Authority of one Kind or other. We seldom hear of a poor and indigent Oppressor, his Circumstances placing him below the Practice of it, so that this Part of the Charge is as necessary as it is true, and in fact a Circumstance that could not possibly be avoided.

My Sentiments, in Relation to some Particulars, may, in all Probability, differ from the Sentiments of others: A Man's Faith or Opinion is not in his own Power, and therefore he cannot believe or disbelieve otherwise than upon Evidence; but I hope I shall always lie open to Conviction, shall never think worse of any Man for a mere Difference in Sentiment, shall never upon that Score account any honest Man as an Enemy, but esteem him as a Brother, and claim the same Allowance from him in this Point which I am ready to grant him upon all Occasions.

To

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To take up Opinions upon Trust ; to think as my Neighbour thinks, or to believe by an implicit Faith, is however extremely wrong and unwarrantable. I am not infallible, but then I am not for submitting to the Infallibility of others ; perhaps I may not see so clearly as they do, but then I have the Satisfaction to think, that I see with my own Eyes, trust to my own Judgment, and have examined for myself. But it has been urged that “ these Discourses had a Tendency to irritate, inflame and raise the Passions of the People.” To which give me leave to reply, that I was not preaching to the *Mob*, but to a small, serious, well-disposed Congregation, in an obscure Place ; and I have good Reason to believe that my Sermons had no such extensive Influence ; but supposing they had produced any bad Effects, it must have happened thro’ their being perverted and misapply’d, and the Abuse of any Thing is no good Argument against the Use of it.

It is evident that the Bulk of the Nation, and even Persons of Rank and Character entertained the same Sentiments that I did.

---A Time of real Scarcity is the only

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Season

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Season for Men engaged in that Branch of Business, and of corrupt Principles, to exert themselves; a Time of Plenty affords no such Opportunity, and it is really for the secular Interest of such Dealers that Corn should bear a considerable Price. The Dispute is not whether there are any honest Men of that Profession (I hope in Charity there are Numbers;) but the Question is, whether there are none otherwise minded?---The Cornfactors, &c. we may suppose, are not such a righteous Set of People, as to have no Unrighteousness among them; for when they have People at a Pinch, some of them, I apprehend, will squeeze and screw up their Neighbours, as is common among unfair Dealers in every other Profession.

The trading Part of the Gentlemen in and about Manchester, employed the poor labouring People in those difficult Times; and I really believe many of them to their own Disadvantage; how these Discourses could be so misconstrued is to me a Mystery; but *Nemo Omnibus Horis sapit.*

But it has been asserted, that "a Combination in Regard to the Corn Trade was impracticable."---I must confess it does not appear

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appear so to me. We have seen, by Experience, Combinations carried on among large Bodies of Men in various Branches: A Combination of even Five or Ten Thousand does not appear impossible; but be that as it will, I can't help thinking, that a few rich Farmers, or large Dealers, without any Combination or Confederacy at all, might, by using some selfish Arts, in a Time of real Scarcity, enhance the Price, and make what was dear before still dearer. If this be an impracticable Thing, at least in particular Places, those ingenious Men who have so often wrote against withholding Corn in a Time of Scarcity, must be fighting against their own Shadows, beating the Air, and opposing a Figment of their own Creation. If Men of an established Reputation have so widely erred from the Truth, and been involved in such palpable Mistakes; a private Minister, in an obscure Part of the Country, may certainly be pardoned, tho' he has (in good Company and with an upright Intention) imbibed the same chimerical Delusion.

I have indeed read a small Treatise upon the Corn Trade, and Corn Laws, the chief Design of which is, as I apprehend, to

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prove what nobody denies ; however the Author is so generous as to acknowledge that the Cornfactors, &c. are not such an equitable Set of People but that they will get what they can for their Trouble. Q. E. D.

In Places at a Distance, I have been told that Flour was dear but good ; in Manchester it was generally allow'd there was both good and bad ; be that as it will, I have seen Meal or Flour in the Country, adulterated beyond all Description ; for indeed I can scarce tell what it was, only I was told it was intended to be Bread for the poor ; nor did I see it in any poor Person's Hands, who might be judged partial, but in the Hands of those who were disinterested, and who, I apprehend, sifted Matters to the Bottom -- Our Superiors, no Doubt, were convinced of the Necessity of such a Law when they passed an Act against adulterating Meal and Flour ; it was therefore Time to put a Stop to such scandalous Proceedings ; nor was any Person to blame, at that or any other Season, for uttering these sad Truths. If the better sort of People in Manchester were used in a different Manner, as might possibly be the Case, that could be no Reason

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son for affirming that the poor Country People were not oppressed in this particular. I thought them oppressed ; I spoke my Sentiments freely, and am sorry if I have made any Man my Enemy by only telling him what I took to be the Truth.

The following Discourses are published under a great and manifest Disadvantage, as they were not originally designed for the Press, and consequently not penned with such Accuracy as they ought to have been ; and as Circumstances require that they should be sent into the World with no material Alteration, the Reader it is hoped will make suitable Allowances.



Prov.



Prov. xxix. 7. *The righteous considereth the Cause of the Poor, but the wicked regardeth not to know it.*

TO do as you would be done unto was the Advice of our blessed Saviour, and was long before likewise the Doctrine of the wise King *Solomon*; and if this Rule was carefully observed, it would rectify many Particulars in civil Life, and put Things upon a different Footing to what they generally are; for it is owing to the Want of this, that Kingdoms, Cities and private Societies are often unhinged, and every Thing appears in wild Disorder and Confusion; for wherever it happens that Persons invested with Power exert it in a Manifestation of their Authority, rather than in doing Justice and shewing Mercy to Mankind, they forfeit the good Opinion of the wise and virtuous and acquire the Character of wicked and ungodly Men. It is a vain
Imagination

Imagination in any Man, let him be who he will, to think that Riches and Splendor and Power and Authority, abstractedly considered, will form the Character, and fill up the Station and Office of a great and useful Man. And yet we see many in the World who are accounted Gentlemen, whose very Tempers and Dispositions are inconsistent with that Denomination; their Manners a Contradiction to the Title, and who instead of being polite and friendly are Persons of the most boisterous, haughty, domineering and imperious Behaviour --- Whereas the Man of true Honour, is one who studies the good of his Country, who endeavours rightly to understand the Cause of every Man (both rich and poor) and in an impartial Manner redresses all Grievances to the utmost of his Power; who strives to promote universal Good, and if possible makes all around him chear- and happy.

To repell Force by Force, is not always the most eligible Scheme; for our Saviour has positively commanded us to overcome Evil with Good; that is, to overcome ill Usage by attempting the Good of the Aggressor. To countenance a poor
Man

Man in his Cause, merely upon Account of his Poverty, is expressly forbidden in the sacred Writings, but to regard his Cause, so far as it is founded upon Truth and Reason, is what we are frequently exhorted to by the wise Man.

In discoursing from these Words I shall endeavour, First of all, to point out the Character of a righteous Man, so far as it is implied in the Text; and

II. The great Folly and Wickedness of those who act contrary to the Law of Nature and the Dictates of Humanity; and shall then close the Subject with a suitable Application.

I am first of all to point out the Character of a righteous Man so far as is implied in the Text.---Now a righteous Man endeavours to do that which is lawful and right. This is his essential Characteristick. So far as he degenerates from this Principle he degenerates from himself. He looks upon it as his indispensable Duty to do Justice and Judgment between Man and Man, in all Matters where he has any Concern: For Instance---If a righteous Man be engaged in Trade, especially in that Branch of it which chiefly concerns the

C

Poor

poor, he then pays a particular Regard that he be not guilty of Extortion or Oppression; to be guilty of these would be to transgress the Laws of God and his Country, and therefore he looks upon this Practice as a mean Thing; he scorns to suck the Blood of the Fatherless and Widows, and of those who have none to help them; he has more Humanity than to build upon the Ruins of his Neighbour; and tho' it may perhaps be in his Power to be oppressive yet he does as he would willingly be done unto, places himself in the Circumstances of those whose Circumstances he really pities, and not only does this himself but blames the contrary Practice as inhuman and barbarous. Again;

If the righteous Man be a Person in Authority *The People rejoice*: He endeavours to put the good Laws of his Country into Execution, secures the fair Trader, is a Terror to evil Doers, but a Protector of those who do well; he suppresses all unfair Methods of Acting to the utmost of his Power, and takes Care, as far as possible, that the poor shall be satisfied with Bread. He does not threaten the Terrors of War and Imprisonment against those

those who are already sufficiently oppressed with Hunger, but contrives Methods to regulate Disorders by putting a Stop to those exorbitant Abuses which are the Cause of them: This is the pious, the righteous, the good and valuable Man and Christian; and while *scornful Men bring a City into a Snare*, as Solomon has justly observed, such Men as these, to make up the latter Part of his Observation, are oftentimes a Means of *turning away Anger and Wrath*. But further.

If a righteous Man acts in any publick Character, whether he be a Minister of State or a Minister of the Gospel, he lends his Voice for the publick Good; the former has a more immediate respect to the Body, and the latter to the Soul. A righteous Man endeavours to promote the Tranquility and Happiness of Mankind both in Time and to Eternity; he looks down with contempt upon the little Censures that may possibly be made upon his Proceedings, and values Truth and a good Conscience more than the vain Applauses of the giddy and unthinking Multitude. The honest Statesman strives with pleasure to make up all Deficiencies in those

Laws, which are either evaded by the vicious, perverted by the ill-designing, or which do not reach up to that superlative Degree of Wickedness that is perpetrated by the prophane and impious. As for the Divine, if he be an honest Man, he makes Scripture and Reason, Truth and human Nature, to the best of his Knowledge, the Standards of his Doctrine, and appeals to Conscience when he thinks any of them invaded. This he does for the Benefit of Society, and for the universal Happiness of Mankind both here and hereafter; for whether they will hear or whether they will forbear he has then delivered his Soul; and the Sinner must take the Consequence of his Impiety upon his own Head.

The righteous Man considers the Cause of the poor in a Variety of Instances: If he himself be rich, perhaps those Riches were the Acquisitions of his Ancestors, and he considers that other Men might have been born to Possessions as well as himself, and that he might have been born to Poverty as well as his Neighbour; that there is therefore no intrinsic Difference upon that Account between him and them;
that

that all Men are made of one Blood and of like Passions one with another ; that Hunger and Cold are Qualities which sooner or later have the same Effects upon all ; that in this respect all Men are equal, and should therefore be of a sympathizing Temper and Disposition of Mind.

But provided the Riches of the righteous Man are his own Acquisitions ; supposing he has amassed considerable Sums, and got great Possessions by a frugal Industry, still he considers, that notwithstanding this he may still become poor ; if he be in Trade, his Ships may be wrecked upon the tempestuous Ocean ; his Warehouses may be destroyed by some accidental Fire---his Servants may embezzle his Goods, or Chapmen may fail in his Debt thro' Losses, Luxury, or Intemperance ; by these and the like Means, tho' in flourishing Circumstances at present, he may be reduced to a Piece of Bread, and forced to take Shelter in some friendly Hospital ; and therefore considering these Contingences he makes to himself a Friend of the Mammon of Unrighteousness, lays up a good Foundation for the Time to come, that when he fails here he may have solid Satisfaction

tisfaction in his own Breast, and at last be received into everlasting Habitations. But

Supposing a Person be in such Circumstances as render it impossible to imagine that he will ever come to Poverty, still a righteous Man in those Circumstances considereth that tho' he should never be poor, he may, notwithstanding that, be very miserable, may possibly be afflicted with some Distemper which may hinder him from taking his necessary Food with Pleasure, or even from taking it at all; that Health and long Life are Articles which cannot be purchased with Money, and that tho' he be very rich, he may at the same Time be very wretched; these Considerations make him very compassionate, with Regard to the poor; for tho' he has not experienced what it is to be pinched with Hunger and Want, yet he knows, like the blind Man who judged of Colours, that Affliction and Misery are convertible Terms, and therefore is inclined to deal tenderly with those, who to all outward Appearance, are sufficiently depressed. To add Sorrow to Grief, is a Thing which he accounts barbarous, and condemns the Practice as a Piece of Inhumanity.

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The righteous Man does not pass over the Cause of the poor superficially, and answer their Complaints as Pharoah's Taskmasters did the Children of Israel, but considereth the Thing thoroughly in all Shapes and Instances ; he knows that it is impossible to make Brick without proper Materials, and that when the poor are screwed up to the highest Pitch of Labour, beyond which it is impossible to exceed, they must then, without some timely Deliverance, fall a Sacrifice to wicked and unreasonable Men ; in a Word *the Righteous Man is merciful even unto his Beast, but the tender Mercies of the wicked are cruel.*

The constant Doctrine of our Lord was Mildness and Benevolence, Compassion, Candour and good Nature : *Love your Enemies* says he (and much more than your fellow Creatures, who are not your Enemies) * *and do good and lend, hoping for nothing again, and your Reward shall be great, and you shall be the Children of the bigbest, for he is kind to the Unthankful, and to the Evil, be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. Judge not*

* Luke 6. 35. 36. 37. 38.

and

*and ye shall not be judged ; condemn not and ye shall not be condemned ; forgive and ye shall be forgiven ; give and it shall be given unto you ; good Measure, pressed down and shaken together, and running over shall Men give into your Bosom, for with the same Measure that ye mete withall, it shall be measured to you again. Wo be to those then, who amass Riches by grinding the Face of the poor, * for there is a Generation of Men, says Agur, whose Teeth are as Swords, and their Jaw Teeth as Knives, to devour the poor from off the Earth, and the Needy from among Men.*

Which leads me to the second Thing proposed and that is to shew the great Folly and Wickedness of those, who act contrary to the Law of Nature and the Dictates of Humanity.

I have already shewn how the righteous Man considereth the Cause of the poor, but the wicked, says the wise Man, does not regard to know it ; that is, a wicked Man does not desire to know or be informed, because he has no Concern about his poor Neighbour : All his Thoughts center in himself, and his Mind is intent

* Prov. 30. 14.

upon heaping up an immoderate Fund of Wealth. A Man of this Character, in Opposition to the former, who is covetous in the worst Sense of the Word, is generally speaking not content with immoderate Gain ; no, he makes it his Business and Pleasure to screw up poor People to the highest Pitch of Exorbitancy; his Demands are not satisfied with bare Oppression, but he runs up Extortion into the superlative Degree ; his Conduct must however be very imprudent ; for even a wicked Man if he regards his own Interest, tho' he has no Respect either to God or his Neighbour, will confine his Extortion to certain Limits ; because if he exceeds these he may know very well, that it is impracticable for the poor to comply with his Demands, and in Consequence of this, that a Revolution of one Kind or other, not at all to his Advantage must of Necessity ensue, so that it is impolitick in him to be overmuch wicked, for hereby, as the wise Man observes, he is in Danger of bringing himself to an untimely End. *Eccles. 7. 17. Be not overmuch wicked, that is, be not wicked to an Extreme, neither be thou foolish, why shouldst thou die before thy Time.*

D

It

It is foolish as well as impious, to run to very great Lengths in Vice and Wickedness, for there is a certain Standard in Vice, as well as in other sublunary Things, which if a Man exceeds, he not only draws the Resentment of the wise and virtuous upon his own Head, but likewise the Curses even of the profligate and abandoned.

Virtue is an essential Cement to Society, and without some Degree of Virtue, it is impossible for the worst Societies in the World to subsist ; so that a Gang of Robbers are obliged, in some Degree, to make a mechanical Use of moral Virtue ; for tho' they are at War with Mankind, yet a Sort of Justice, Honesty, Truth, Compassion and Sincerity subsist among themselves ; if any one of the Fraternity injures another, and acts to the Detriment and Disadvantage of the rest, he is universally blamed by them and branded for it ; so that tho' a Man be even a Rogue by Profession, it is notwithstanding that very foolish in him, while he continues to be so, to transgress the Limits of that Friendship, and those narrow, contracted Rules of Hospitality ; to exceed the common Standard of Impiety exposes a Man to the Indignation

tion of his fellow Creatures, and stands closely connected with temporal Destruction.

Thus have I shewn that it is Folly in any Man to counteract the Law of Nature and the Dictates of Humanity: Such a Person, as he sets himself in Opposition to Mankind, has Reason to expect that he will be looked upon as their common Enemy, and that Mankind will set themselves in Opposition to him. Honesty, upon the whole, is the best Policy, and those whose Practices are barbarous and inhuman, or in other Words villainous and unjust, act a very unreasonable, and consequently a very unwise and foolish Part. They do as they would not be done unto, and so make void the Laws of God and the Doctrines of the Gospel. Besides ---If a Man uses others ill, he effectually stops his own Mouth against complaining of ill Usage from his Neighbour; for those who in this Respect transgress the Law of Nature, and the Dictates of Humanity, may justly be ranked among the worst of Men: They render themselves odious both to good and bad, and such a Behaviour is so far from prudent, that

a Man, as I observed before, foolishly and often, by this Means, clashes with his own temporal Advantage, and effectually ruins himself. Schemes of Vice are so inconsistent with themselves, that they frequently crumble to Pieces, and expose the Vicious to Infamy and Want. Justice, Equity, Mercy, Truth and Sincerity promote the common Interest, and tho' Individuals may flourish for a while upon their Vices, yet they are generally * *cut down like the Grass*, their career is stopped, *and they wither as the green Herb*. Sometimes indeed † *the wicked may do Evil an hundred Times, and his Days be prolonged*; that is, *all things may come alike to all*; the wicked may prosper as tho' he was righteous; yet with Regard to his Portion in a future State of Existence, he is undeniably acting with the most consummate Folly, Madness, and Indiscretion.

Again; The Man destitute of Humanity, who has divested himself of all natural Affection, is no better than a Beast. The Oppressor is not at all superior in his Practices, but much worse than the Horse and Mule which have no Understanding. The

* Psalm xxxvii. 2. † Eccles. viii. 12.

Man who pays no Regard to the Publick, who has no Compassion for the poor, and for such as are in Distress, is an useless Member of Society; such a Person should either confine himself to a Monastery, or banish himself into the private Recesses of some desolate Island—For what Business has any Man in the conversible World who is resolved to do no good in it, but only eat and drink and die when he can live no longer. The Benefits resulting from Society are innumerable, while the Life of a Hermit is attended with a Thousand Infelicities; but a Person of the Character I have just now mentioned, as he preys upon the Publick, and is an Encumbrance to Society, can put in no proper claim to the Advantages arising from a social Intercourse, and therefore deserves to be subjected to those Inconveniences, and to be made as miserable as he would willingly render the Lives of others wretched and uncomfortable. In a Word, when a Man counteracts the Law of Nature and disobeys the Dictates of Humanity, when he puts off the Man and Christian and puts on the Brute and Savage, he is then capable of committing any Wickedness

ness that lies in his Way, tho' ever so iniquitous and unjust. To instance in Traffick and Merchandise : I believe it will be readily allowed--- " That the true Intent
 " and Meaning of Commerce is general
 " Advantage and publick Good. Trade
 " is not designed to make one Man rich
 " at the Prejudice of many : It is designed
 " to spread Friendship and good Correspondence; to carry Convenience to every
 " Quarter, and furnish our Wants upon
 " a reasonable Exchange. Now these
 " Ends are best secured by keeping Business in a great many Hands. To draw
 " this Stream into a private Channel," as an ingenious Author has observed, " is to
 " be an ill Commonwealth's Man. 'Tis
 " to baulk the publick Interest ; 'tis to
 " disserve the Society to which as Members we are bound to be true. When
 " the Things engrossed are Provisions," says he, for he was then speaking against this Kind of Inhumanity, "'tis commonly a great Hardship upon the poor.
 " Thus the Necessaries of Life are hung
 " so high that a little Stature cannot reach
 " them ; for which Reason there's a lamentable Disproportion between the
 Purse

" Purse and Stomach of a great many Peo-
 " ple; now what unnatural Injustice is it for
 " a Man to fetch his Plenty from his Neigh-
 " bour's Want, to thrive by Oppression
 " and grow great by starving the Needy ?
 " * *Solomon* has told us how such a Man
 " will be beloved. *He that withholdeth*
 " *Corn*, that is, he that hoards it up to
 " sell it dearer, *the People shall curse him* ;
 " and we have Reason to believe that he
 " who does so in a Time of Scarcity will
 " have God's Curse too " † 'Tis a most
 monstrous Abuse upon Mankind, that a
 few should engross the Supports of Life,
 and advance to overgrown Fortunes, while
 Multitudes of others, much honest than
 themselves, are pining for Want of proper
 and necessary Sustenance. Persons of this
 Character, or any who espouse their Cause,
 are so far from being righteous, that they
 stand chargeable with the most consum-
 mate Wickedness and Cruelty. All illegal
 Proceedings no doubt ought to be sup-
 pressed, and the most effectual Method of
 doing this, I humbly apprehend, is by
 enquiring into the Grounds of popular
 Complaint, by redressing Injuries and put-

* Prov. xi. 26. † Collier's Essays.

ting an immediate Stop, as far as possible to all violent Measures in an impartial Manner and without Respect of Persons.

To brandish the Sword of Oppression, with a View only to silence and terrify the Poor and Needy under any reasonable Grievance, without having Recourse to the before-mentioned Expedients, would be extremely wrong. For thus says the wise Man; * *Rob not the Poor because he is poor, neither oppress the Afflicted in the Gate, for the Lord will plead their Cause, and spoil the Soul of those that spoiled them.* It is very certain that † *Oppression maketh a wise Man mad*, causes him to do Things which he would otherwise not do; and therefore to prevent such Irregularities, the Legislature has thought proper to enact several wholesome Laws, which it is great Pity were not better put into Execution:

Which brings me to close the Subject with a suitable Application.

And give me Leave in the first Place to address myself to the righteous, to those who consider the Cause of the poor, and permit me to observe that many Passages of

* Prov. xxii. 22. † Eccles. vii. 7.

Scripture are directly calculated for your Comfort and Encouragement; a Repetition of them would be both tedious and improper; but you may consult them all along in the sacred Writings for your private Edification, and may apply them with Satisfaction to yourselves. A well-circumstanced Charity is a glorious Thing: An indiscriminate one may indeed evidence an honest, well-meaning Disposition; but then it manifests at the same Time a weak and inattentive Mind. The Magistrate who makes it his Business to redress Grievances, acts a commendable Part, and will have not only the Blessing of the Poor, but likewise the sincere Thanks and Eulogies of the wise and virtuous, the considerate and thinking Part of Mankind; and indeed all wise and good Governors desire the Hearts and Affections of the People, much rather than a mere outward Shew of Authority and Power, which can produce nothing but a slavish and hateful Awe, that may probably one Time or other terminate in Mischief and Confusion: To rule well, and to be beloved by wise and good Men, is the sincere and earnest Desire of every understanding and

E

good

good Governor, whether supreme or subordinate ; and the Happiness arising from a filial affectionate Obedience, yields abundantly more satisfactory Sensations than those that arise from Terror and a slavish Dependence : And though the best of Magistrates may sometimes be abused by the worst of Men, yet the Composure that results from a good Conscience makes ample Amends, and the resplendent Virtue of such a Magistrate, frequently breaks out like the Sun from an Eclipse, or from under the Shadow of a dark Cloud, and shines with its former Glory, while the Cloud of Aspersions vanishes, Defamation is buried in Oblivion ; *and while the Name of the Wicked shall rot, the Memory of the Just shall be blessed, and he shall be had in everlasting Remembrance.* But as I have not the Honour to speak before Men of the before-mentioned Character, I mention it in a cursory Way, and shall only add, that if a rich Man denies doing me Justice, either through Carelessness, Ignorance or Dishonesty, 'tis small Consolation to be told, that the Gentleman is worth Fifty Thousand Pounds. A steady Adherence to Justice and Judgment be-
tween

tween Man and Man, can alone produce agreeable Ideas with Regard to any Person in the Opinion of the Judicious; and therefore let every Man consider likewise, that as Piety and Virtue recommend those who are in public Stations to the Love and Esteem of every wise and worthy Man, so they will not fail of recommending private Persons, according to their respective Capacities, to the same Favour in the Eyes of the Discerning. If a rich Man makes it his Business to promote and encourage those poor People, who are honest and industrious, and to discountenance the lazy and indolent, he then acts the Part of a religious and honourable Man. The Man of Fortune, who calculates all his Schemes with a publick Spirit, who regards the meanest of his Fellow-Creatures, and strives to make his Charity as extensive as possible, who by a single Action promotes a double Good, and renders himself useful in the World; a Protector of Virtue, a Scourge to Vice, and a Refuge for Distress; such a one is truly rich in good Works, lays up a good Foundation for the Time to come, and may reasonably expect to lay hold on eternal Life.

But on the other Hand, how dreadful is the Prospect of a rapacious Miser, who lives for himself, and not only so, but for no Body besides ; a Glutton may possibly feed the Poor with some Crumbs or Fragments from his luxurious Table, but the avaritious Self-seeker pays no more Regard to his Fellow-Creatures than to his Fellow Brutes, if so much. All is centered in Self, and the Virtues of Benevolence and Charity are Articles to which he is an entire Stranger. He disregards the Cause of the Poor, and forgets that they have animal Appetites in common with himself. He has Opportunity to know and become acquainted with the Difficulties under which others labour, and yet wilfully shuts his Eyes, turns his Back, and is resolved to be ignorant of their deplorable Condition. He has his Wants supplied, and therefore concludes easily with Regard to his Neighbours ; he is above taking Notice of their Distress, and in short gives himself no Trouble about what becomes of them. A Man of such griping Principles renders himself contemptible to the worthy Part of Mankind ; he has many Enemies,

mies, and his Company, through his extreme Selfishness, becomes disagreeable even to his best Friends; the Name of the Wicked, as *Solomon* has very justly observed, shall rot with his Carcase, while the Memory of the Just is blessed in his Life-Time, and after his Death shall be held sacred and venerable.

We find both in Scripture and profane History, that the Poor in all Ages were oppressed by Extortioners; that it was common for unreasonable Men to make a Hand of them; that a State of Poverty was despised, and those who were placed in it often insulted by Persons of Affluence. *Juvenal*, the Poet, observed in his Time, that Poverty was a great Unhappiness and a great Hardship, because, says he, "it renders Men ridiculous," which was correspondent to *Solomon's* Opinion; and it is observable, that wise Men in all Ages, and of all Nations, have generally entertained the same Sentiments.---*There was a little City*, says he, *and few Men within it, and there came a great King against it, and besieged it, and built great Bulwarks against it. Now there was found in it a poor wise Man, and he by his Wisdom delivered*

*vered the City; yet no Man remembered that same poor Man; then, said he, Wisdom is better than Strength; nevertheless the poor Man's Wisdom is despised and his Words are not heard **. The wise Sentences of a poor Man pass unobserved, while the very same Sentences uttered from a rich Man's Mouth command universal Regard. People in general give greater Attention to the weak Passages of a rich Speaker than to the fine Reasonings of a needy Logician. This Respect of Persons and Things proceeds not from a Love to Truth, but from an Attachment to Pride and Vanity. Did a Man seek after Truth with Sincerity he would be as glad to find it in the Cottage of a Peasant as in the Palace of a Prince; the poor Man's Wisdom would be properly regarded and the rich Man's Follies would be treated with Contempt. A pompous Appearance, Splendor and Grandeur, may dazzle weak Eyes, and raise a Dust before the unthinking Multitude; but a righteous Man judges calmly, upon second Thoughts, and considers every Circumstance with mature Deliberation;

he does not reject a wise Man's Opinion though he be poor, nor take a Fool's Counsel though he be immensely rich. It has indeed sometimes happened, I believe, that the poor Man's Wisdom has born down all Opposition, and the poor wise Man has been suffered, because he could not be hindered, to start out of Obscurity, and appear in the publick Circle of Life; but then it has been owing to some uncommon Genius; for the common Dint of Ingenuity would hardly be sufficient to strike out a Light for the Guidance of Inferiors, while those inferior Capacities could not be prevailed upon to believe that the poor Man had in Reality exceeded the true Pitch of their own Wisdom, Discretion and Understanding; for a poor Man frequently finds it difficult to persuade others that his Sentiments are worth Observation, while the Opinions of the Rich are readily swallowed, and embraced with the utmost Greediness, even before they come to the Bottom of the Understanding. I only mention this to shew, that the Cause of the Poor is disregarded in almost every Instance; that even his Conversation is little
esteemed,

esteemed, and that he is not suffered to influence among golden Fools; but the Scripture will tell you, in a Variety of Places, *that God is no Respector of Persons, and that if ye have Respect to Persons ye commit Sin, and are convinced of the Law as Transgressors.*

END OF THE FIRST SERMON.



SER-

S E R M O N II.

P R O V. XIV. 31.

*He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his
Maker ; but he that honoureth him bath
Mercy on the poor.*

IT has been reckoned, in all Ages, and
in every Place, an essential Part of
the righteous Man's Character, to be mer-
ciful to the Poor, charitable to his Neigh-
bours, and benevolent to Mankind.----
Under various religious Denominations,
this has always been esteemed a funda-
mental Point ; destitute of these sociable
Virtues, every Man becomes an useless
and insignificant Mortal ; but if he runs
into the opposite Extreme, and becomes
guilty of Oppression, Injustice and Vio-
lence, he not only reproaches his Maker,
as if he was a partial and cruel Being, but
F exposes

exposes himself likewise to the Indignation and Resentment of an injured People.

Oppression may very justly be ranked among the very worst of Vices ; it converts Mankind into Savages, and draws them on from one Degree to another of the most cruel and barbarous Deportment. He that oppresseth the poor, reproaches, and is guilty of Ingratitude against his Maker : And to call a Man ungrateful, is in Effect calling him every Thing that is bad ; for Injustice, Violence and Extortion, are detestable both to God, and every reasonable Man.

In discoursing from these Words, I shall First enquire into the various Kinds of Oppression, and shew in what Respects they cast a Reproach upon Providence ; shall then point out the great Beauty and Excellence of a different Character ; and conclude with a suitable Application.

But before I enter upon the First of these, it will be proper to say something with Regard to the Objects upon which this injurious Vice is generally put into Exercise and Execution ; and those are the poor and indigent Part of our Fellow-Creatures. Oppression is very seldom, if
ever,

ever, levelled against the rich, because they are placed in a great Measure above its Reach. The rich Man can either make himself content without elegant and superfluous Things, or is able to purchase them at an exorbitant Price ; whereas the poor Man is liable to be pinched not only in the Conveniences, but even in almost all the Necessaries of Life. If a rich Man oppresses his Neighbour, they are generally a Match for each other ; but the poor Man has none to help him : And therefore, *if a rich Man will sue thee at the Law, and take away thy Coat, let him have thy Cloak also ; and if he compels thee to go a Mile go with him twain.* If a rich Man chuses the Ways of an Oppressor, he may distress the poor in a Variety of Instances ; he has it in his Power to abuse and injure those who have a Dependance upon him, and it is impossible for the poor Man to redress himself ; for a fatal Dilemma lies before him, and take whether Side he will he must be a certain Sufferer. A Man of an independent Fortune, provided he does not expose himself to the Censures of right Reason, and the good Laws of his Country which are

grounded upon it, may say what he pleases; and as he covets no Man's Money he needs be afraid of no Man's Displeasure; but it is otherwise with such as are in a State of Dependance. The poor Man who gets his Living by his daily Labour, if he contradicts his Master, or speaks any Thing, though ever so true, in Opposition to his Master's Interest, may depend upon his Frowns, and that he will withdraw his Favours from him; the Consequence of which must sometimes be inevitable Beggary and Ruin; for which Reason he is obliged many Times to suppress the Truth, is drawn into mean Compliances, and obliged to do what he dislikes, for Fear of incurring some greater Mischief; such a Man's Condition is really to be pitied, and certainly admits of some favourable Allowance. Most certain it is, that we ought to suffer rather than sin; but while a Servant is obliged by Force and Compulsion, to countenance, in some Degree, the Errors and Mistakes of his Master, he may do himself an Injury, but can be of no Service in reclaiming his Master by opposing him: In such a Case as this, I humbly apprehend, the
 Offence

Offence will be totally imputed to the rich Man, and cannot reasonably be charged upon the Dependant; which was actually the Case of *Naaman*, the Syrian: When *Elisha* had cured him of his Leprosy, he desired that *two Mules Burden of Earth might be give him*; for, says he, *thy Servant will henceforth offer neither Burnt-offering, nor Sacrifice unto other Gods, but unto the Lord*; yet believing that his Master would still retain the established Religion; therefore, says he, *in this Thing the Lord pardon thy Servant, that when my Master goes into the House of Rimmon, to worship there, and he leaneth on my Hand, and I bow myself in the House of Rimmon, when I bow down myself in the House of Rimmon, the Lord pardon thy Servant in this Thing* *. Thus it is with those Clergymen who depend upon Persons in high Life, or upon their Auditors for a Maintenance; if they displease in any Point they are sure to suffer for it. If they cannot in Conscience come up to the Standard of Orthodoxy, the usual Way is to trim, varnish and gloss Things over, and equivocate a little to

* 2 Kings v. 17, 18.

make

make them palatable. If those Persons be of an oppressive Temper, then Truth must be stifled; the great Duties of Patience, Resignation and Acquiescence, must be recommended to the poor, that they should submit themselves to the rich, and be content with their Condition. Thus the poor are sometimes oppressed by, and become Dupes to the rich, and it is the Man only who has no Dependance upon such People that dares be bold to say--their Money perish with them. Thus have I attempted to shew, that the poor are the chief Objects or Subjects of Oppression: Because, First; They cannot subsist without the Necessaries of Life: And then, Secondly; Because those Necessaries depend upon others.

Which leads me to enquire into the various Kinds of Oppression, and to shew in what Respects they cast a Reproach upon Providence.

In the first Place then, sometimes it happens that poor Men are oppressed by being made the Objects of Insult and Contempt; they are often despised, disregarded and ill treated. * “ As if a Man's

* *Collin's Essays.*

“ good

" good Sense held Proportion with his
 " Acres, and his Understanding was equal
 " to his Estate; whereas to condemn a
 " Person for being born Heir to Poverty
 " and a poor Education, is great Barba-
 " rity and a Reproach upon Providence;
 " besides, Poverty sometimes comes upon
 " us by unavoidable Accidents: The La-
 " bour and Industry of many Years are
 " destroyed on a sudden; a comfortable
 " Fortune is burnt down, carried to the
 " Bottom by a Tempest, or buried under
 " the Ruins of an Earthquake. Some-
 " times People are poor because they are
 " resolved to be honest;" and therefore
 to despise a Person for Circumstances
 which he cannot help, is an Affront to that
 Being with whom it is easy to make a
 poor Man rich. But further--- † " To
 " squeeze a poor Man when we have
 " him in a Strait, is in fact oppressive and
 " injurious, " for it happens sometimes
 " that a Man's Necessity must come to any
 " Terms.---The Exchange may be bene-
 " ficial tho' screwed up never so high;"
 thus as an ingenious Author has observed,
 " he who weighs Diamonds against Bread,

† *Collier's Essays.*

" when

“ when he is ready to starve, is a Gainer
 “ by the Bargain” The poor Man must
 have Bread, and therefore must submit,
 tho’ obliged to rise early, sit up late, and
 feed upon the most uncomfortable Viands;
 he’s forced to comply with very unreason-
 able Conditions, if required, provided he can
 but keep, as is commonly said, his Soul
 and Body together: Oppression is there-
 fore an unchristian Practice, whether on
 the rich or the poor Man’s Side; tho’ it but
 seldom happens to fall upon the former.
 The poor seldom have it in their Power to
 distress the rich; but should it ever hap-
 pen, as no doubt it sometimes does, it is
 offering an Affront to our Maker, and is
 equally a Reproach upon the Conduct of
 divine Providence. * “ If a Man, indeed,
 “ be reduced by his Vices and sunk into a
 “ State of Povetry thro’ his own Extrava-
 “ gance, he ought to be coldly received
 “ but not insulted; because as Poverty is
 “ his Fault, that alone,” without any ad-
 ditional Scoffing or Scurrility, “ ought to
 “ be his Punishment.” To carry our Re-
 sentment any further, is to invade the
 divine Prerogative, and consequently a Re-

* Collier’s Essays.

proach

proach upon our Maker, as tho' he was wanting in the Execution of Rewards and Punishments. In a Word, to squeeze our Neighbour when we have him in a Strait, to build upon his Ruin, or to make an Advantage of his Distress is a Behaviour highly provoking in the Eyes of Almighty God ; it is acting upon Terms of Dishonour, and favours not only of *Fraud* and *Cozenage*, but of *Rigour* and *Inhumanity*.

To monopolize or engross the Necessaries of Life, with a Design to enhance or raise the Prices of them to an exorbitant Pitch, is Wickedness in the superlative Degree. It is a most shocking and monstrous Kind of Oppression; nothing can exceed it, nor indeed come up to it. If a Man was to set his Wits at Work, and live to the Age of *Methusaleh*, he might indeed commit the same Crime over and over again, but he could never deserve a worse Character ; for it is the very Quintessence of all other Vices in one. *The Love of Money is the Root of ALL Evil, which while some covet after they err from the Faith, and pierce themselves thro' with many Sorrows* *.

* 1 Tim. vi. 10.

G

Another

Another Branch of Oppression is when People adulterate the Necessaries of Life and make the Poor * *spend their Money for that which is not Bread, and their Labour for that which satisfies them not*: This is, as the Scripture calls it, *grinding the Face of the Poor*; an Article that ought to be redressed, and will be so as soon as possible in every well-ordered Constitution of Things; and the covetous Worldling who sells Chaff instead of Bread, will one Day become § *like the Chaff which the Wind driveth away*.

To mix useless or pernicious Things with the Supports of Life is a very great Crime: A Crime made up of several different Vices; it is dishonest as well as barbarous; and a Man must be an overgrown Monster in Iniquity before he can persuade or prevail upon himself to commit such a detestable Piece of Wickedness, which is really offensive to Nature, and shocking to the Perceptions of Humanity; such Mixtures would be criminal in the most severe *Famine*, because they have not the least Tendency towards the Preservation of Life, but are really de-

* Isaiah iii. 15.

§ Psal. i. 4.

structive of Health, and might probably bring Distempers upon the human Body. This is therefore by no Means allowable; and it is the Business of wise and good Magistrates to bring Offenders in this Way to Justice as far as lies in their Power; which if they do not, they themselves must in some Degree be accountable to the supreme Being, for the pernicious Consequence of conniving at them.

As I have attempted to illustrate the various Kinds of Oppression, I shall now proceed in a more particular Manner to shew in what Respect they cast a Reproach upon Providence. In the First Place.

The Man who endeavours to monopolize the Necessaries of Life, that is to engross or get them into his own Power, encroaches upon God's Prerogative; he wants to have the Blessings of Providence, like *Simon Magus*, that he may dispense them at his own Pleasure, setting himself in the Room of his Maker, and making himself as God, having Life and Death at his Disposal, and doing what seems good in his own Eyes; he strikes at God's providential Government of the World, and rears himself up as an Idol, expecting the

Reverence and Homage of those who are so unhappy as to have their Dependence upon him ; he robs God of his Glory, and assumes that Honour which is peculiar to the great Majesty of Heaven and Earth, and therefore may truly be said to reproach his Maker.

Besides ; As Famine is one of God's fore Judgments, so to create * an *artificial Famine*, is to multiply the Miseries of Life ; and to do this, purely on the Account of the Love of Money, is acting a most audacious as well as wicked Part : It is like taking the Thunderbolts out of the Hands of Omnipotence, and casting about Firebrands, Arrows and Death ; such a daring and impious Circumstance, one would be inclined to think was out of the Power of Man to put himself into ; as it debases human Nature so much, and is levelled so remarkably against the great Power and Providence of God. He who looks upon a State of Poverty with a

* It cannot be supposed that the Author could be acquainted with any particular Schemes : His Opinion in this Point was grounded upon Accounts received from credible Persons ; but chiefly upon the News Papers and Magazines, published at that Time. To those he refers the inquisitive Reader.

contemptuous and haughty Air, does, in Effect, despise and reproach that Providence which has placed those People in the lower Scenes of Life: But let such remember, that it is not he who acts the longest or most eminent Part upon the Stage that comes off with the greatest Applause, but he who acts his Part best, whatever it happens to be; and therefore those who lead virtuous and good Lives, will be regarded by the thinking and valuable Part of Mankind, though they are not in a State of Affluence and Prosperity.

This leads me to the second Thing proposed; and that is, To point out the great Beauty and Excellence of the opposite Character.

But *he that honoureth his Maker*, says my Text, *bath Mercy on the poor*: That is such a Man is, upon the whole, of a charitable, sympathizing, benevolent Temper and Disposition of Mind: He does not abuse and distress the poor in the main Supports of Life, and then compound for a good Name by some publick and charitable Donations; but the whole of his Behaviour and Conduct, the very Bent and Tenor of his Life

Life and Conversation, is Charity, Mercy and Compassion : He does not give Alms to be seen of Men : He does not do it with a View to popular Applause ; but he places himself in the Circumstances of others, and does as he would willingly be done unto : He knows that he cannot be profitable to God, and therefore can shew his Gratitude no other Way, than by treating those with Humanity who are in Circumstances capable of being profited by him.

The subject Matter of Man's Acquittance or Condemnation at the decisive Day, is represented by Love, Charity, Almsgiving, and their opposite Vices.---
I was hungry, and ye gave me Meat;
 that is, you gave it to my Disciples and Followers, which was in Effect the same with your giving it to myself; for he who honoureth God must of Necessity be merciful to the poor and needy, because he can honour God no other Way in fact, than thro' translating the Favours, conferred on him by divine Providence, to Men of like Passions with himself, who stand in Need of his Assistance, and may be profited by him. This is the only sure Way to evidence the Sincerity of his Intentions;

tentions; and therefore St. *John* exhorts, that he who professes to love God, must make the Truth of his Profession appear by good Will towards Men; or as he himself expresses it, by *loving his Brother also*.

But to be more particular; let us enquire into the various Ways and Methods in which Men of all Professions may exercise Compassion and Charity towards the miserable and distressed.

And First of all; It is evident from the Reason of Things, that *Health* is an Article to which the poor have a Sort of natural Right; for as we are all made of one Blood, and equally liable to a Variety of Disorders, if Nature can possibly be relieved by Art, no Man should want this Relief barely upon account of his Poverty; nor should any Man be suffered to labour under bodily Distempers, merely because he has not where-with-all to pay for the Restoration of his *Health*: A mutual Claim in this Point seems to subsist, among all Ranks and Degrees of Men, of being serviceable to each other, and to neglect or overlook the poor in this Particular is the ready Way to bring down
Judg-

Judgments upon a People; and therefore those are much to be commended, and are indeed Blessings to a Nation, who generously exert themselves in promoting the temporal *Health* and *Happiness* of their Fellow-Creatures; who do not found an Hospital at Death to compound for the Sins of a mis-spent Life, but are merciful to the poor at a Time when even they themselves are in the Prime of their Days, and in all Probability, may live to see, in repeated Instances, the good Consequence of their benevolent Conduct.

But Secondly; The poor as well as rich have a right to *Justice*; for though every Man cannot go to the Expence of Law, yet he should have Right done him notwithstanding that; for which Reason, some publick Provision in this as well as the former Case, may at first Thought appear equally necessary; but as it sometimes happens that the Remedy is worse than the Disease itself, it might induce the malevolent Part of the Poor to be the more litigious: And hence appears the Imperfection of such-like Institutions; that no Regulation will reach every Case; and notwithstanding all the Laws and Statutes that

that can be made, something after all must be left to the Conscience, to the voluntary Conduct and Behaviour of Mankind. But this I must take upon me to say, That he who honoureth his Maker, whether engaged in the Profession of *Law*, or in the Administration of *Physick*, will always be merciful to a poor Man; will ever be ready to plead his righteous Cause, or to restore his *Health* upon the most reasonable Terms; and will not expect the same Acknowledgement from a poor labouring Person as from those who are well able to endure the Expence.

And so it is likewise with Regard to Ministers of the Gospel: The Divine, if he does his Duty in an impartial Manner, will not screen the Vices of the Powerful; he will exclaim loudly against Oppression when there appears to be Occasion for it, and will use his best Endeavours in Behalf of the poor and needy. Indeed, if he finds People invincibly obstinate and irreclaimable, impatient of Reproof, full of Wrath and Resentment, then our blessed Lord, and even common Prudence itself, commands him to

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be

be silent; because, if in such Circumstances he was to speak his Mind, he must inevitably oppress himself and transgress the Words of my Text: And therefore, if he honours his Maker, it is an indispensable Duty to have Mercy upon himself and Family; *for he that provideth not for his own, and especially for those of his own House hath denied the Faith, and is worse than an Infidel* *.

A Minister, however, if he be merciful to the Souls of Men, will give proper Advice to the utmost of his Power, and warn Sinners of approaching Danger. The poor as well as rich have a right to religious Instruction, and the former ought to enjoy it at the Expence of the latter; but if the rich refuse to lend their Assistance in propagating the Gospel, and promoting the Knowledge of Truth, they are evidently out of the Way of their Duty, and cannot reasonably expect the Favour of God; for to deny the poor of the before-mentioned Advantages, is an apparent Instance of Oppression, and a great Reproach upon divine Providence. The merciful

* Matt. vii. 6. 1 Tim. v. 8.

Man wisely considers all this : And in these Particulars, *be that benouretb his Maker will have Mercy on the poor.* A merciful Man will not impose upon his Fellow-Creatures ; if engaged in *Traffick* and *Merchandise* he will not abuse or oppress such as want Discernment ; will pity the narrow Circumstances of his indigent Neighbour ; will not exact upon the Necessity of another ; will not create an *artificial Scarcity*, or make use of his Neighbour's Indiscretion to his own Advantage ; will not flatter the conceited, or build his Prosperity upon the Ruin of others ; he will on the contrary love his Neighbour, and do that to others which he could wish in the same Circumstances might be done to himself. This is the humane, the generous, the charitable and beneficent Man ; and unless a Man acts up to this Character, he cannot properly be said to honour his Maker as he ought to do. Every Man, though never so poor, has a natural Right to so much as is absolutely necessary to support his Being ; for which Reason, the good Laws of our Country have put it out of the Power of covetous Men to famish, or keep alive, just as

they think proper. The poor are by Law to enjoy a Subsistence, which yet does not exclude the Generosity of the pious and well-disposed; so, that he who honoureth his Maker, may shew Mercy to the poor according to their respective Circumstances and Deserts, by adding to that scanty Allowance some generous Gratuities of his own. Mercy to the poor, is a Debt which he that honours his Maker, and is in Circumstances to do it, owes to the Publick. In some Branches of *Trade* and *Merchandise* the Price of Commodities is fixed, and consequently both rich and poor are and ought in Justice to be equally used; but then this is no Hindrance to Charity and Almsgiving; besides, as I observed just now, the Subsistence of the poor is by Law established. But in *Law*, *Physick*, or *Divinity*, to which the poor have an undoubted Right, the Case is otherwise; and in these and such-like Instances, there is Room both for the Practitioner and the Publick to succour the distressed: And unless they do this, they may be taxed with *oppressing the poor and reproaching their Maker*; but if they ho-
nour

your him they will in these Particulars have Mercy upon the poor.

This brings me to conclude the Subject with a brief Application,

And now, my Friends, above all Things * *have fervent Charity among yourselves, for Charity shall cover the Multitude of Sins; and use Hospitality one to another without grudging; for thus saith the Apostle; He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly, and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully: Every Man according as he purposeth in his Heart so let him give, not grudgingly or of Necessity; for God loveth a chearful Giver.*

No good Man will grudge to help the distressed, whatever is the Channel of Conveyance; he will not only part with that chearfully, which he is bound to give by the Laws of his Country, but will add some voluntary Contribution for the better Being of the needy and distressed. Those who are brought into Distress by unavoidable Accidents are really to be pitied; and even those who are brought to Poverty thro' their own Folly, should not be entirely neglected.

* 2 Cor. ix. 6, 7.

Such

Such as are decayed and reduced by Casualty, or for Conscience Sake, their Character should be thoroughly considered, and they should be treated with a distinguishing Regard. The Manner of doing such Persons any Service should be particularly gentle and good-natured ; and therefore let me advise you, my Friends, in every Act of Generosity, to study, not only what to do, but how to do it in a kind and acceptable Manner. Every Man in Distress should not be treated as a Beggar ; nor every charitable Action performed with the Air of giving an *Alms*. To assist People of Parts and Education, especially those who have been in good Circumstances, in a rough and overbearing Manner, is very unbecoming. Use every Person in a Manner suitable to his Condition ; for Haughtiness and Ill-Nature in assisting the distressed, makes the Kindness of little Value, especially to feeling and delicate Minds. *Persons of Worth and good Sense*, if they accidentally fall into Distress, or if they be placed by Providence in the lower Scenes of Life, should notwithstanding that, as I observed before, be treated with a distinguishing Regard.

Relieve

Relieve them as an Act of Generosity, and a Debt of Honour; Persons of Character, such as I have just now described, have a Claim to mild Usage; a Right to be well treated, and kindly received; because a State of Dependance to Men of generous Principles, is of itself a sufficient Affliction; which made the wise Son of Sirac observe, that *the Life of him that dependeth on another Man's Table, is not to be counted for a Life, and therefore, my Son, says he, lead not a Beggar's Life, for better is it to die than to beg* *; that is in other Words a State of Dependance is subject to so many Inconveniences, that even Death itself is esteemed in some Respects more eligible to Persons of tender and delicate Sentiments; therefore don't assume an overbearing, haughty Air of Authority, when you confer Favours upon another, but do it in a good-natur'd and affectionate Manner; for such-like Persons will be sufficiently sensible, of every Obligation conferr'd upon them, without any rude or unkind Dictatings to be so. Such a mean and ungenerous Manner of conferring Favours is a very great Weakness or something

* Eccles. xl. 29.

that

that deserves a worse Name. Finally, my Bretheren, *let all Things be done with Decency and Order.* Decency in this Case is certainly a Virtue, because the opposite Behaviour is an Insult and Affront; and to insult or affront our Fellow-Creatures, is what we have no Right to do: Upon the whole, consider the Words of my Text, and lay them to Heart. Square your Actions and Practices by them continually; for *He that oppresseth the Poor reproacheth his Maker, but he that honoureth him hath Mercy on the Poor.*

END OF THE SECOND SERMON.



POST-

P O S T S C R I P T.

THE Author begs Leave to enter a Caveat against all particular and personal Applications, which are the ready and most effectual Method to destroy a Minister's Usefulness in any Religious Assembly whatsoever; for when a Member of any such Society takes it into his Head to think himself pointed at, every Sermon, though never so general, is turned into a *Libel*, and it becomes almost impossible for a Minister to utter any Thing but what may and will be converted into *Ridicule* and *Satire*; his Discourses, though never so innocent and inoffensive will constantly be construed into *Sarcasm* and *Invective*; his Endeavours to do good will be entirely blasted in Proportion as such an Opinion prevails among his Auditory; and as this infectious Notion is pernicious to the last Degree, and is frequently

quently the Subject of Complaint, the Author begs Leave to recommend the Words of the Apostle, 2 *Peter* i. 20. As likewise that Observation of the *Spectator*, Vol. 8. No. 568, which may perhaps be of Use in softening if not curing the most inveterate Prejudice.

T H E E N D.





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